

Rich and 'Operation Spiderweb'

Lewis Libby's client, fugitive swindler Marc Rich, is now the target of an international law enforcement crackdown on money laundering. "Operation Spiderweb," a European and American joint effort to shut down a Russian Mafiya money-laundering operation in a half-dozen European countries, arrested 50 top Russian Mafiyosi in June 2002, in a probe that was an outgrowth of the Bank of New York case of the late 1990s. The chief prosecutor of Bologna, Italy told reporters that 150 other targets are soon expected to be arrested. A warrant is out for Grigory Loutchansky, the founder of Nordex, a Vienna-based company that was at the center of KGB and Communist Party dirty flight capital out of the Soviet Union as it crumbled. Prosecutors have evidence that Rich was the silent partner of Loutchansky in launching Nordex, and Rich, too, is a likely target of arrest and prosecution.

At the heart of "Spiderweb" are two Russian brothers, Igor and Oleg Berezovsky, accused of heading the money-laundering operation that the *Guardian/Observer*, on June 16, 2002, said had laundered \$9 billion in Mafiya funds, between Europe and the United States, following the crackdown on the Bank of New York. Beginning in 1996, money was laundered from Russian Mafiya-controlled banks in Moscow to the Bank of New York account of Benex Worldwide. Both Loutchansky and Rich have been linked to Benex, and another Loutchansky front company, Kama Trade, has been directly tied to the Berezovsky laundering operations in Europe. Some of the dirty Mafiya money went to Chechen rebels, according to several of the news accounts, through a Berezovsky collaborator, Andreas Marissov.

Another Russian Mafiya name that came up in the "Spiderweb" probe is Yossif Kobzon, a Moscow-based Mafiya boss, who was twice elected to the Duma and is called "the Russian Sinatra" (he is a top Russian pop singer). Whenever Marc Rich is in Moscow, according to an *EIR* source, he stays at Kobzon's luxury apartment.